

**Using Pair Work to Promote Students’
Oral Interaction**

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USING PAIR WORK TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' ORAL INTERACTION

Abstract

KEYWORDS: oral interaction, pair work, speaking development, willingness to communicate, young learners.

This report describes the action research project I engaged in as part of my practicum as a trainee teacher during my master's degree in teaching English in primary education. It investigated how pair work could be used as an environment in which learners would develop self-confidence and, as a result, increase oral interactions in whole class situations in the target language. The study also served to assess the effect of pair work on the development of students' speaking, more specifically their fluency and ability to use an adequate range of vocabulary. The research took place in a state primary school in a town close to Lisbon, Portugal. The students involved in this study were a group of 26 children in year four, aged between 8 and 10 years old who had two weekly one-hour lessons of English during the morning period. The study was implemented from late-September to mid-December and the method chosen was a small-scale action research project. The research tools used were two questionnaires, a learning journal and observation of pair work tasks. In addition, further strategies were implemented such as reflection on the use of the mother tongue at the end of each class. The study concluded that students perceived that pair work benefited their confidence and speaking development. Data collected by the teacher also confirmed that there was an increase in the amount of spontaneous interactions between teacher and students in whole class situations, although the same did not happen between peers. Furthermore, the study revealed that the relationship between the members of each dyad significantly influenced their interaction.

O TRABALHO DE PARES COMO FORMA DE PROMOÇÃO DA INTERACÇÃO ORAL DOS ALUNOS

Resumo

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: interação oral, trabalho de pares, desenvolvimento da produção oral, autoconfiança, jovem aprendiz.

Este trabalho de pesquisa é parte integrante da minha prática de ensino supervisionada durante o Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º ciclo do Ensino Básico. O objetivo principal foi investigar como o trabalho de pares poderia ser usado como meio para o desenvolvimento da autoconfiança nos alunos o que, como resultado, aumentaria as interações orais perante toda a turma na língua alvo. O estudo também serviu para avaliar o efeito do trabalho de pares no desenvolvimento da produção oral dos alunos, mais especificamente na sua capacidade de usar vocabulário adequado e na fluência. A pesquisa decorreu numa escola primária pública, numa vila perto de Lisboa, Portugal. O projeto envolveu um grupo de 26 alunos do 4º ano de escolaridade com idades compreendidas entre os 8 e 10 anos. As aulas de Inglês decorreram no período da manhã, duas vezes por semana, durante sessenta minutos. O estudo foi implementado entre o final de setembro e meados de dezembro e o método escolhido foi um projeto em pequena escala de investigação ação. Os instrumentos de investigação utilizados foram dois questionários, um diário e a observação das atividades de pares. Para além destes, outras estratégias foram implementadas, tais como a reflexão sobre o uso da língua materna no final de cada aula. O estudo concluiu que os alunos reconhecem os benefícios do trabalho de pares para o desenvolvimento da autoconfiança e da produção oral. Os dados recolhidos também confirmaram um aumento no número de interações orais espontâneas entre a professora e os alunos em situações de interação com toda a turma. Contudo, o mesmo não se verificou entre alunos. Ademais, a pesquisa revelou que o padrão de relação que se estabelece entre os elementos de cada par pode influenciar significativamente a interação que se estabelece.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the research

As teachers of young learners, our main objective is to develop their basic communicative competence, emphasizing listening and speaking skills (Enever, 2011). The *Metas Curriculares de Inglês 1º Ciclo*, the official curriculum in Portuguese primary schools, also highlights the importance of giving priority to oral interaction in the early stages of language learning when they mention that the reference domains defined for each year of English convey a vision of foreign language learning that, in this particular teaching cycle, enhances oral skills. (Cravo, Bravo & Duarte, 2015). In this sense, we need to support our students by providing controlled and guided activities but also lead them to freer use of the language with activities where they can express the language they know in a creative and autonomous way (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

Research carried out by Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) indicates that listening and repeating new vocabulary isn't enough to engage children in using the target language in an authentic way. Teachers need, therefore, to consistently provide meaningful opportunities for students to interact and also to develop their willingness to communicate, that is to look for opportunities to genuinely communicate using L2, as stated by Cao and Philp (2006). According to most researchers (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002; Cameron, 2005; Moon, 2000; Philp & Duchesne, 2008; Slattery & Willis, 2009;), pair work, as a communicative teaching and learning strategy, provides an environment that effectively enhances peer interaction and facilitates language acquisition. However, according to Scott & Ytreberg (1990), speaking is one of the most demanding skills to teach. The constraints include young learners' insufficient language to communicate and the high expectations they carry when starting to learn L2.

During my teaching practice, class observations and solo teaching lessons, I noticed that the students participated with enthusiasm in all classroom activities, yet, they used their mother tongue to communicate with their peers and the teacher most of the time. English was used only in drilling situations or when children were directly instructed to answer only using English. This happened even in the cases when they knew the necessary vocabulary and language structures to produce simple utterances in the target language. I also noticed that some students seemed reluctant to use English. I often wondered what caused this behaviour and how I could overcome it.

2. Purpose and aims of the research

The focus of my research is to examine how pair work can develop students' oral interaction in the classroom by helping them to use the language they have already acquired to communicate through meaningful tasks. Hence, the aim of this study is firstly, to understand if students will gain more confidence and be more willing to communicate with their peers and teacher in the target language as a result of a consistent use of pair work activities. Secondly, the study serves to assess the effect of pair work on students' speaking development, in particular their fluency and ability to use an adequate range of vocabulary. Underlying this research project are the questions I aim to answer:

- How pair work promotes students' oral interaction with teacher and peers in the target language;
- How pair work increases students' willingness to communicate;
- How pair work develops students' fluency and vocabulary use.

This study is divided into two chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the literature on oral interaction in the first section and the benefits and constraints of pair work in the second section. The following chapter includes a brief description of the context of the study and the methodology chosen to achieve the purposes and aims of this research. Hence, it presents a description of the selected research tools, the procedures to implement them and how data was analyzed. This chapter also introduces the results of the study and a brief summary of the research questions and findings. In the last section, it discusses the analysis of the results and their relevance and finally draws some conclusions.

CHAPTER I – LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this research project aims to highlight the importance of oral interaction in young learners' English language learning and the development of their speaking skills. Furthermore, it addresses the relevance of pair work in achieving this aim. The first section of the literature review clarifies the term 'oral interaction' in second language learning and illustrates how the development of speaking skills and students' willingness to communicate play an important role in the promotion of oral interaction in the target language. The second section focuses on communicative activities as the means to develop oral interaction and it explores the use of pair work in the English language class emphasizing its advantages and constraints.

1 Oral interaction

1.1 Defining oral interaction

Interaction is a key feature of communication. Oliver and Philp (2014) define oral interaction as "the spoken language that takes place between two or more people and, as the name implies, it is the type of speaking and listening that occurs in real time in communicative exchanges" (p. 5). In addition, these authors mention its mutual and collaborative nature as it is built on the interlocutors' verbal and non-verbal language as well as its social relevance, since interaction promotes the development of social relationships and social skills that will positively impact language learning and learners' development as a whole (Oliver & Philp, 2014). In second and foreign language classroom settings, the term oral interaction applies to communicative exchanges that range from teacher/student discussions to student/student activities and even off-task conversations.

According to Oliver and Philp (2014), oral interaction has a reciprocal nature which facilitates language acquisition. Thus, oral interaction promotes the transfer of views, emotions and concepts from one interlocutor to the other(s) influencing each of them in a mutual way. In fact, Ellis (2005) argues that successful L2 learning and proficiency development require the existence of opportunities for students to produce the language. Citing Skehan and Swain, the author suggests that learners' output, that is, the language students produce, plays an important role in learning the target language. He also mentions the importance of oral interaction in language acquisition not only as

a “means of automatizing existing linguistic resources but also of creating new resources” (p.219).

As previously mentioned, one of the forms of oral interaction in the classroom is that which occurs between teacher and learners. According to Gibbons (2003), teachers scaffold students’ language development by providing the necessary support to help them learn new skills and concepts, with the ultimate aim to “hand over knowledge and control to the students” (p. 249). In addition, the author mentions that teacher-learner exchanges occur in different contexts such as providing feedback, giving instructions, questioning or modelling.

Research into oral interaction also points to the need to focus on meaning. One of the principles of oral interaction is that meaning must come first (Cameron, 2005). Similarly, children need to “participate in discourse and build up knowledge and skills of participation” (Cameron, 2005, p.36) to be able to develop speaking skills and engage in oral interaction in foreign language learning.

1.2 The development of speaking skills in young learners

Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) assert that it takes more than listening and repeating new vocabulary and language structures to acquire communicative competence, which is, the capacity to use the target language to communicate. Although children’s early utterances in L2 comprise formulaic and routine language, as their learning progresses, students will move from more controlled practice to activities that foster freer and more spontaneous use of language, thus increasingly building on their speaking skills. Equally, teachers need to take into consideration that in order to develop children’s pronunciation, fluency, appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar, and discourse management, they will need to use a diverse range of activities, vary the patterns of interaction and provide as many opportunities as possible for students to talk in the classroom, first, through repetition of vocabulary and structures and after by using the language in a less controlled and more creative way (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002).

Linse (2005) argues that children do not develop their L2 speaking skills more quickly than adolescents or adults. Their greater advantage is being able to attain closer to native like pronunciation. Therefore, children’s initial utterances are expected to be simple, repetitive language that will eventually develop into longer utterances according to the overall developmental state of the child, as happens with the mother tongue. The same is advocated by Phillips (1993) who also adds that children naturally enjoy having little conversations or playing games, hence, these types of age appropriate activities should be integrated into early

language learning as they are suitable tools for speaking practice and development but also sustain and increase young learners' motivation.

Fluency is one of the elements of speaking that benefits from learners' use and practice of the language (Oliver & Philp, 2014). As noted by Segalowitz, cited in Oliver and Philp (2014), "the benefit of practice is that as learners gain more skill, they require less effort to produce language and become more fluent" (p. 33). Thus, language production becomes more automatized and requires less effort. The authors also state that as students speak and try to make themselves understood, they will connect form and meaning, hence developing all aspects of oral skills.

1.3 Understanding students' *willingness to communicate* in the second language

As second language teachers we often find that although we promote a classroom environment that encourages oral interaction between teacher and students and between students and their peers, there are children who easily initiate communication in the target language, yet others remain silent despite having high linguistic competence and adequate speaking skills. Research carried out by McIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels explored this gap and presented the concept of *willingness to communicate* (WTC) as "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (McIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998, p. 547). These researchers argue that WTC refers to the will that learners of a second language have to actively seek opportunities to communicate in that same language. Nevertheless, students' willingness to communicate varies over time and circumstances according to some variables presented in the pyramid model developed by the authors. (Fig.1).

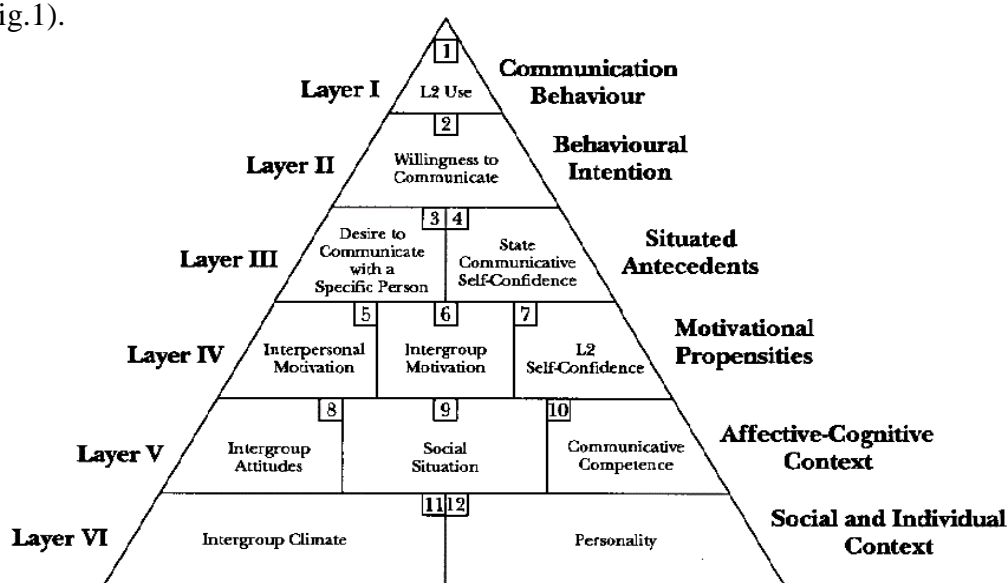


Fig. 1 – Model of variables influencing WTC, (McIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998)

The origin of these variables is linguistic, communicative and social psychological and they work as antecedents to the use of the second language. The first three layers may fluctuate according to specific situations but the three at the base are more enduring influences on WTC.

Cao and Philp (2006) supported the research mentioned above by confirming the existence of several factors that influence WTC in classroom settings. These were “the group size, familiarity with interlocutor(s), interlocutor(s)’ participation, familiarity with topics under discussion, self-confidence, the medium of communication and cultural background” (p. 480). Students are more willing to initiate communication in L2 in smaller groups or pairs, rather than in whole class settings. They will also more easily engage in communication with familiar individuals. Higher levels of self - confidence and the perceived familiarity with the topic also result in higher levels of WTC, according to Cao and Philp.

2. Communicative tasks

2.1 Characteristics of communicative tasks

Interaction is a key feature of communicative language teaching and facilitates learning. Most research shows that a communicative approach should be comprised of meaningful and purposeful tasks that provide a real need for interaction (e.g. Cameron, 2005; Oliver & Philp, 2014; Slattery & Willis, 2009). There are many definitions of what a task may consist of and one of them describes it as:

a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of a task may predispose them to choose particular forms. (Ellis, 2003, p.16).

Taking into consideration all the different concepts of the term ‘task’, Cameron (2005) tries to define it for young learners. According to this author, a ‘task’ has to be logical, it needs to focus on meaning, be purposeful and use language that can be found in the ‘real world’. Another characteristic of a ‘task’ designed for children is that its language learning aims must be very clear, and it needs to be cognitively engaging for learners. When using tasks during pair work, teachers also have to take into

consideration the need to balance the demands of the activities with the necessary support (Cameron, 2005). This was the definition of task used in this study.

In a traditional teacher centred classroom there are few opportunities for students to interact in a meaningful and real way. Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) advocate that teachers should balance teacher centred activities with more interactional ones where children have the opportunity to interact with peers. The teacher's role, in this case, changes from one who controls all the interactions in the classroom to one who facilitates communication, promotes autonomy and organizes the activities.

2.2 The social nature of pair work

Pair work is a learner-learner type of interaction involving, in this case, a dyad. Interaction between peers facilitates language acquisition and development especially when activities are made to meet an authentic communicative need (Oliver & Philp, 2014). Furthermore, peers are described by Hartup and Newcorb and Bukowski and Bagwell, as cited in Philp and Duchesne (2008) "not just as contributors to development, but as context for development, in the same way that the family and the school can be described as contexts, to which the child contributes as much as s/he is influenced by them" (p.86). Indeed, just as family connections are contexts where children learn norms and models of social relationships, the relationship between peers also functions as a context for the mutual learning of norms and linguistic models.

2.2.1 The strengths of pair work

In a communicative approach to language teaching, pair work can be used for several reasons. Firstly, considering the advantages of using it as a means of enhancing oral interaction, Slattery & Willis (2009) point out that pair work gives learners the opportunity to speak, asking and answering in a more natural environment that produces less stress on the speaker. Moreover, it promotes children's independence and autonomy but also co-operation, allowing them to learn from each other. Peer interaction provides a context that fosters negotiation, feedback and modified output (Philp & Duchesne, 2008). Since children in a classroom are mostly at the same cognitive and social developmental level, sometimes it becomes easier to understand a language structure when clarified by a peer, rather than by an adult, in this case the teacher. According to Oliver and Philp (2014), although teachers are the model and the

main source of input for young learners, peer interaction is a valuable resource that contributes to students' academic, social and cultural success.

Secondly, as mentioned by Moon (2000), another of the advantages of pair work is that it increases the amount of talking time available to all students. Learners can also practice their oral skills in a more effective way than with the teacher or as a whole class. In pair work environments students feel more at ease and are more willing to engage in communication. In addition, pair work contributes to a more student-centred class, where the teacher is also free to monitor and closely observe the interactions that develop between the children. Finally, the sociable nature of children allows pair work to provide the ideal medium for the enhancement of social skills such as promoting turn taking and respect towards others (Moon, 2000).

2.2.2 The weaknesses of pair work

It is largely consensual that pair work is beneficial to second language acquisition. Nevertheless, there are some less positive aspects to it that need to be taken into consideration. Hill (1995) mentions the need to effectively manage students' behaviour, particularly noise levels, the excessive use of the mother tongue and off-task talk. Furthermore, Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) state that it is necessary that students have sufficient maturity and preparation to be able to develop pair work. Therefore, careful planning and plenty of practice are required since in many situations students are not used to working in pairs with the mainstream teacher.

Peer interaction, and pair work in particular may, in certain situations, as suggested by Philp and Duchesne (2008), be obstructive to second language learning depending on the children themselves "and the interaction of personalities" (p. 99). Some research asserts that teachers need to carefully take into consideration the personality traits of the children in order to balance shy and timid students and children who are more extroverted and may tend to play a dominant role within a dyad (Storch, 2002). Studies carried out by Storch (2002), reveal that language development within pair work depends on the nature of the interactants and the result of the interaction of their personalities. The author identified four patterns of interaction in pair work: collaborative, expert/novice, dominant/dominant and dominant/passive. The first two are more likely to successfully scaffold language learning by providing a context of "collaborative dialogue that reflects cognitive processes" (Storch, 2002, p. 148). On the contrary, the latter two will not benefit language learning since these contexts do not

provide room for negotiation. According to Oliver (1998), children, as adults, benefit from the process of negotiating for meaning as it gives them the opportunity to receive comprehensive input, produce comprehensive output and obtain feedback on their language production to understand each other.

Carless (2007) in one of his studies on task-based learning pointed out that communicative tasks, largely used in peer interaction and pair work need to be “context-sensitive” (p.604) and balanced with other task modes. This means that they must acknowledge and reflect the cultural context of learners and teachers. Moreover, the author argues that tasks such as the ones used in pair work focus mainly on fluency development and don’t integrate sufficient grammar practice.

As mentioned above, pair work has limitations. However, I believe that its weaknesses can be overcome with careful planning and consistent practice of this type of interaction. The benefits are, therefore, far greater than any disadvantages.

3. Summary

Developing students’ oral interaction is key to their success in second language acquisition, even for younger learners who have limited speaking skills. The literature reviewed on this topic points out the need to engage students in peer interaction through meaningful communicative tasks that will not only develop their communicative competence but also contribute to their development as a whole. Pair work, although presenting some constraints which are easily managed, is an important tool to foster oral interaction and the willingness to communicate in young learners.

CHAPTER II – THE ACTION RESEARCH

1. Context

The students involved in this study were a group of 26 children in year four, aged between 8 and 10 years old. The group had a good learning pace, but there were four students who were slower learners. The children were all native speakers of Portuguese with the exception of one student who was American and bilingual (Portuguese and English). They had good working habits, a very good attitude towards learning English and their behaviour ranged from being a little noisy to quieter. These students had started learning English in year three, as part of their curriculum, and had no prior contact with the language in a classroom setting, before that time. Their lessons with the mainstream teacher were very teacher-centred, hence they were not used to working in pairs or doing more autonomous work. The study took place in a state primary school in a town close to Lisbon, Portugal. The students had two weekly one-hour lessons of English. They were seated in pairs, and their desks were aligned in four rows. The classroom was not very spacious and had no internet access nor an interactive board. The use of technology was, thus, very limited and needed to be taken into consideration when planning the lessons, as was the case with space.

The course book adopted by the school cluster was *Start! 4* (Silva, Silva & Leslie, 2016). It was a suitable course book and I used many of its suggested activities as they were presented, others I adapted. I also supplemented with extra materials and activities adapted from Puchta and Williams (2011) and Read (2007) as well as from other course books used in primary education, whenever I found appropriate.

During my practicum, I taught 22 lessons from late September to mid-December. My approach to teaching was one of developing communicative competence in the students. I tried to use activities that enabled them to draw on their communicative resources and practice primarily their listening and speaking skills in meaningful ways, as that is the purpose of English language learning in primary education and was the focus of my research project as well. I also planned my lessons to be as student centred as possible, giving children the opportunity to practice language in a more independent and autonomous way.

2. Methodology

The method I chose to develop the study was a small-scale action research project. As stated by Burns (2010) this methodology is appropriate for classroom research since it combines critical reflection and practical action to obtain a response to

a specific dilemma, problem or gap found in everyday teaching practice. According to the same author, action research “involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts” (p.2). This type of methodology is based on a cyclical process that alternates between planning, action and reflection. In the following cycles, the methods and actions are perfected after the interpretation of the collected data and the overall previous experience.

To implement this study, I followed the phased model of action research suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) as cited in Burns (2010). Hence, the first stage contemplated the planning of the study and took place during the first semester of my practicum. At this time, I identified the problem and the approach I would take to address it. I also considered the data collection tools. The second and third stages, namely action and observation, occurred from October to mid-December. During this period, I obtained the necessary permissions from the school board, parents and children and I collected the data. The final stage of this process, the reflection phase, took place in January of the following year when I analyzed and interpreted the data and reflected on the results.

2.1 Permissions and ethical considerations.

In any research study, and especially when working with children, it is necessary to take into consideration some ethical issues such as to request and gain permission from their parents or tutors, the school administration, but also from the children themselves. The informed consent for this study was obtained through letters (Appendices A, B and C) that were written following the recommendations of Phillips and Carr (2010), that is, they included the topics and objectives of the project, strategies that would be implemented, data to be collected, how the project would be made public, the absence of videotaping, picture-taking and risks to students, how confidentiality could be maintained by the use of a pseudonym and, finally, a return slip to be signed by the participants and tutors (p.98). All letters were written in Portuguese and the one given to the children had child friendly and very accessible language.

Prior to distributing the letters to the students, I explained the project to the learners and how relevant and meaningful it would be to their language learning process. In addition, I listened to their opinions and views on what they thought about it and clarified any doubts. An important aspect was that I made clear that the students’

participation was voluntary and that they could leave the study at any time, should they decide to.

2.2 Questionnaires

To achieve the aims of the study and answer the research questions, I used two questionnaires, one at the beginning (Appendix D) and the other at the end (Appendix E) of the research project. According to Richards and Lockhart (2007), questionnaires are a good tool to survey learners' preferences, opinions and thoughts on particular aspects of learning and teaching. In addition, I selected this tool because of its efficiency in terms of time and effort and also its versatility, that is, it is easily adapted to use with children. The fact that it is easier to process is also an advantage (Dörnyei, 2003).

The first questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of October. It included seven statements and a four-point Likert scale designed with the aim of assessing the students' initial perceptions on their whole class participation and willingness to communicate, their level of confidence in speaking individually and in pairs and their opinion on the relationship between pair work and speaking development. The final questionnaire was completed in the last week of classes before the Christmas break, that is, at the end of my research project. It also included seven statements and a four-point Likert scale. The statements were very similar to the ones in the initial questionnaire, the only difference being the use of the Past Simple in the statements related to pair work. Both questionnaires were answered in the classroom.

The data collected from the questionnaires was then analyzed quantitatively in order to find patterns in the children's responses. The results are presented in tables that illustrate students' opinions expressed in percentage and number of answers. Students' initial and final choices were compared with the purpose of checking if there had been any changes in opinions on the matters being studied throughout the research period.

2.3 Learning journal

The second data collection tool I chose was a learning journal. As stated by Moon (2006), the benefits of learning journals range from being a good means to enhance learning through the process of writing our beliefs and views on teaching, to encouraging metacognition, that is reflecting about our own processes of learning. Furthermore, according to the author, the ideas and reactions of students and teacher can be captured in a

learning journal, hence contributing to better understanding and clarity of learning and teaching processes.

The learning journal helped me reflect on the implementation of the pair work activities. There, I recorded my thoughts on the students' motivation and reactions during the pair work tasks, their difficulties regarding instructions and if the aims of each task were accomplished. The journal also proved useful to record classroom observation notes regarding students' interactions outside pair work with teacher and peers, their 'voices' and comments. The entries in the learning journal were many times based on brief notes I took during classes. The writing usually occurred on the same evening or on the day after the lesson.

The data from the learning journal was analysed qualitatively with the purpose of categorizing the information. Following the guidelines for analysing qualitative data provided by Burns (2010) I highlighted the main ideas which I then narrowed. The results of the learning journal analysis are presented as quotes from my writing.

2.4 Observation of pair work tasks

Observation is a key tool for researchers. According to Burns (2010), observing is a self-conscious act that makes us look at aspects of teaching and learning in a critical way that is specific, objective and analytical. The systematic recording of observations is crucial to reflect, evaluate and improve our teaching and to reach our aims as researchers.

In my research project I used an observation sheet (Appendix F) to collect information during students' completion of pair work tasks. The grid was adapted from a model of speaking task assessment provided by Iannou- Georgiou and Pavlou (2003). The purpose was to obtain organized and efficient information on their fluency, appropriacy of vocabulary, task achievement and use of the mother tongue. Each of these categories was divided into three levels of performance. Regarding fluency, the lowest level referred to frequent and long pauses that caused difficulties in communicating, the second level to the existence of some long pauses which didn't prevent communication and the best performance to effective communication without long pauses. With regard to vocabulary use, the lowest level of achievement represented insufficient or inappropriate vocabulary that hindered communication and use of L1 most of the time, the intermediate level corresponded to the use of a sufficient range of vocabulary to complete the task and a few words or expression in L1 and the highest level referred to the use of a sufficient and appropriate range of vocabulary to adequately complete the task with no use of L1. Finally, the three levels which represented

task achievement ranged from having difficulties in carrying out the task at the lowest level to carrying out the task but with some difficulty at the intermediate level and carrying out the task successfully with relative ease at the highest level.

Information was collected from six students while carrying out eight tasks. As tasks were not very long, I only observed three students at a time, for approximately two minutes each. I chose three weaker students and three average students who were sitting close to each other so that not too much time would be wasted going around the room. To address some of the disadvantages of pair work, I used a voice level chart to control voice levels during the tasks and a United Kingdom flag placed on the board to remind students they had to use the target language. To signal the beginning and the end of pair work activities I used a countdown. At first, the children remained seated with their partners from mainstream classes, but as I got to know them better, I changed a few pairs to balance weaker and stronger students. I also paid special attention to instruction giving for each activity. I used simple, short and clear instructions, visual aids and modelled the tasks with the help of some students.

Analysis of the data collected from these observations was done qualitatively. I examined each student's information on the speaking skills I aimed to assess with the purpose of verifying their progression and the existence of any patterns in the development of their speaking skills. This analysis was complemented and compared with information I had from the student's questionnaires and notes on other aspects of pair work implementation and development.

2.4.1 The pair work tasks

The tasks carried out by the learners were varied (Appendix G). Task 1 was an interview, where students had to ask and give personal information in order to complete a grid. Task 2 was the battleship game with personal information sentences. Task 3 was an information gap activity involving colours and the letters of the alphabet. Each student had ten letters to colour but instructions regarding only five. They had to ask their partner the colour of the other letters to complete the activity. Task 4 was a numbers maze. Each student had to select a path and dictate it to his/her partner. Task 5 was a pelmanism game using places at school mini cards. In task 6 the pairs had to work together to match months of the year and ordinal numbers from 1st to 12th. Task 7 was also a matching activity where students had to make sentences with mini cards and match them to pictures. Task 8 was a dialogue building activity where after practicing as a whole class, students had to repeat the dialogue, replacing some of the information.

When preparing the tasks, my main concern was to create activities where there was a real need for communication. Students had to talk to their partner to get information to complete all pair work activities. I also tried to balance the use of vocabulary and grammar and provide students with the necessary process language, thus promoting autonomy. Only eight tasks were assessed, but pair work was used almost every lesson, which significantly expanded the amount of talking time for each student.

2.5 Classroom strategies

During the research project, three other strategies were implemented to scaffold students' use of the second language. The first was the use of reflection cards at the end of each lesson adapted from Dias and Mourão (2005). The aim of this activity was to enable students to reflect on their attitude towards the use of the target language, among other issues. A question I used with the speaking card (Appendix H) was *Did you use English a lot?* The second strategy I used was a symbol – the U.K. flag – to remind students that they needed to use English during their interactions with peers and teacher. The flag was left on the right side of the board during the English class. The last strategy implemented was to also leave on the board the process language children needed for their pair work activities, such as *it's your turn, It's my turn, missed, etc.* The effectiveness of these strategies was analyzed based on the information in the speaking tasks observation sheet, where I recorded the use of the mother tongue, and learning journal entries.

3. Results

The following section of this research report aims to present the results of my study. The data collected with the tools previously mentioned will be described and analyzed to find answers to the questions which originated this research:

- How does pair work promote students' oral interaction with the teacher and peers?
- How does pair work increase students' willingness to communicate?
- How does pair work develop students' fluency and vocabulary use?

3.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were presented with the purpose of collecting information about students' perceived willingness to communicate individually, in front of the whole class, and in pairs; their perceived level of class participation; and their opinion on the relationship

between pair work and the development of speaking skills. Table 1 presents and compares the results from the initial and final questionnaires.

Table 1

Students' perceptions on participation, levels of confidence in speaking individually/in pairs and relationship between pair work and speaking (n = 25)

Statements	Students' answers (% and number of students)							
	Questionnaire A				Questionnaire B			
	Agree a lot	Agree	Disagree	Disagree a lot	Agree a lot	Agree	Disagree	Disagree a lot
1- A/B - I like to speak English in the classroom.	60% (15)	20% (5)	20% (5)	0	72% (18)	20% (5)	8% (2)	0
2 - A/B - I volunteer to participate in English, during class.	40% (10)	32% (8)	20% (5)	8% (2)	72% (18)	16% (4)	12% (3)	0
3 - A/B - I feel at ease when I speak English in front of the whole class.	52% (13)	12% (3)	16% (4)	20% (5)	24% (6)	36% (9)	28% (7)	12% (3)
4 - A/B - I prefer to speak English in a small group rather than in front of the whole class.	48% (12)	36% (9)	8% (2)	8% (2)	68% (17)	24% (6)	8% (2)	0
5 – A/B - I like/liked to speak English when working/worked in pairs.	80% (20)	13% (3)	8% (2)	0	88% (22)	4% (1)	8% (2)	0
6 – A/B - Working in pairs can help/helped me speak better English.	84% (21)	8% (2)	8% (2)	0	48% (12)	32% (8)	16% (4)	4% (1)
7 - A - Speaking in English in front of the teacher and my colleges makes me nervous.	32% (8)	28% (7)	16% (4)	24% (6)	76% (19)	8% (2)	12% (3)	4% (1)
B - Working in pairs helped me feel more comfortable to speak in front of the class.								

Questionnaire A (Appendix D) was completed at the beginning of October, prior to the use of pair work tasks. At this point, analysis of statement 1 revealed the vast

majority of students (80%) stated that they enjoyed speaking English in the classroom. This value rose to 92% in Questionnaire B (Appendix E) in mid-December. Results from item 2 show that 72% of the students acknowledged they often volunteered to participate, a number that increased at the end of the study to 88%. This result is corroborated by an entry in my learning journal written on 28th November where I described the students' need to be more organized and disciplined in their participation in the sense that "now everybody wants to participate, but not in the most organized way".

In statement 3, learners were asked to assess their confidence in speaking in front of the class. In this item 64% of the students said they felt at ease speaking in front of the teacher and peers in the initial questionnaire. However, that number slightly decreased to 60% in questionnaire B. This result is in contrast with the data collected from statement 7 in questionnaire B, where 84% of the students said that pair work helped them feel more confident to speak in front of the class. The analysis of this result shows that their perception of the benefits of pair work in terms of confidence is different from the way they view their actual performance in front of the whole class. This may result from the fact that they were not used to working in pairs, hence, they were not aware of how they felt about it.

Statement 4 analysis of results shows students' consistent preference in both questionnaires (84% in Questionnaire A and 92% in Questionnaire B) for speaking in pairs and small groups rather than in whole class interaction. In addition, only 8% of the children claimed they hadn't enjoyed speaking in pairs (statement 5). Regarding the perceived benefits of pair work in the spoken language, as can be seen in item 6, almost all the students (92%) stated in questionnaire A that they viewed it as positively impacting on their speaking skills. Yet, in questionnaire B, the percentage slightly decreased to 80%. I believe this gap was due to the fact that either the statement was rather abstract, and they were not able to pinpoint exactly what it meant to "speak better English" or, the time between questionnaire A and B was too short for the children to be able to recognise improvements in their speaking skills.

3.1.1 Individual questionnaires

The analysis of individual answers showed, in some cases, considerable differences of opinion from Questionnaire A to Questionnaire B. I selected three students whose results I found particularly interesting for the research.

The first student I chose was *Carlos*. He was a native speaker of English, yet, during the first two weeks, he didn't volunteer to speak very often. He was an introverted child which may have explained his reluctance to engage in communication.

Table 2
Carlos' responses

	Questionnaire A	Questionnaire B
Statement		
3 - A/B - I feel at ease when I speak English in front of the whole class.	Disagree a lot	Agree
7 - B - Working in pairs helped me feel more comfortable to speak in front of the whole class.	—	Agree a lot

However, as presented in table 2, results from both his questionnaires showed that his attitude towards speaking in front of the whole class changed throughout the research period in a positive way. In addition, I wrote in my journal, “I noticed that he constantly raised his hand to answer” (Learning journal, 21st November 2017).

Isa Tuber is another student who showed a positive change in the way she viewed her willingness to participate individually and in pairs, and her liking for speaking the target language. As shown in table 3, a comparison of results between Questionnaire A and Questionnaire B reveals that pair work helped her feel more comfortable to interact in English with her peers and teacher in whole class and pair work situations and made her enjoy speaking the target language.

Table 3
Isa Tuber's responses

	Questionnaire A	Questionnaire B
Statement		
1- A/B - I like to speak English in the classroom.	Disagree	Agree a lot
3 - A/B - I feel at ease when I speak English in front of the whole class.	Disagree a lot	Agree a lot
4 - A/B - I prefer to speak English in a small group rather than in front of the whole class.	Disagree a lot	Agree a lot
5 - A/B - I like/liked to speak English when working/worked in pairs.	Disagree	Agree a lot
7 - B - Working in pairs helped me feel more comfortable to speak in front of the whole class.	—	Agree a lot

Contrary to *Carlos* and *Isa Tuber*, the third student I chose developed a negative view of the benefits of pair work during the research period. *Windoh999*, according to table 4, enjoyed speaking in front of the whole class, yet, her opinion about pair work evolved in a negative way. A possible explanation for this result was the fact she mentioned that she didn't enjoy working with her partner, *Nemo*. The relationship that developed between these two interactants influenced language development in a negative way. As argued by Storch (2002) unbalanced pairs do not develop collaborative relationships.

Table 4
Windoh999's responses

Statement	Questionnaire A	Questionnaire B
1- A/B - I like to speak English in the classroom.	Disagree	Agree
2 - A/B - I volunteer to participate in English, during class.	Disagree	Agree
4 - A/B - I prefer to speak English in a small group rather than in front of the whole class.	Agree	Disagree
5 – A/B - I like/liked to speak English when working/worked in pairs.	Agree a lot	Disagree
6 – A/B - Working in pairs can help/helped me speak better English.	Agree a lot	Disagree
7 - B - Working in pairs helped me feel more comfortable to speak in front of the whole class.	–	Disagree

Overall, results from both questionnaires showed that this group of students enjoyed speaking in English and that they preferred speaking in pairs rather than individually, in front of the whole class. Furthermore, the questionnaires demonstrated that the great majority of the children perceived pair work as beneficial to the development of their confidence to communicate in the second language and their speaking skills, although in this last aspect, the results from Questionnaire B were slightly lower than in the first questionnaire, possibly because there was not enough time for children to note relevant progresses in their speaking that they could attribute to

the consistent use of pair work or, due to their prior unrealistic views about pair work, a type of interaction they were not used to.

3.2 Students' use of English with the teacher

The purpose of the learning journal was to gather information on students' attitudes towards the use of the language and the activities I presented each lesson. Reflection on this data was used to develop strategies to meet the children's needs and accomplish the aims of the research.

One of the first categories I identified in the learning journal was students' attitudes towards the language. As mentioned in the analysis of the questionnaires, this group of students had, in general, a very positive attitude towards learning English. After my first lesson, I wrote in the learning journal that "the word that best describes them is motivation. They are a very enthusiastic group" (Teacher's learning journal, 26th September 2017). However, the learning journal analysis revealed that the students, although very participative, a fact which had also already been identified in the questionnaires, frequently used the mother tongue in their interactions, "students volunteered to participate a lot, throughout the lesson, yet it was mainly in Portuguese" (Teacher's learning journal, 28th September 2017). In the first classes, I also noticed some uneasiness in a few students' responses. For example, when I asked *Pompom* to help with the date and weather on 10th October, she was very reluctant to answer because she didn't know the appropriate word to use (*warm*). When she failed to answer, one of the other students made a judgemental comment about the fact that she didn't know the vocabulary. This might have accounted for the fact that even though this group of students was highly motivated and willing to participate, their oral use of English was very limited.

By mid-October, I still noticed that the students used mostly Portuguese to interact with myself and peers in two situations: when they had to use classroom language and, during pair work activities, when they needed to use process language:

They don't speak English outside the context of direct questioning. Today, *Merida*, at the end of the lesson, raised her hand and said *Posso fechar o livro, teacher?* I asked her if she could say that in English and she had no difficulties saying *May I close the book?*. However, her first choice was Portuguese (Teacher's learning journal, 12th October 2017).

On 19th October, *Son-Goku* showed the same behaviour, when he asked if he could go to the toilet in Portuguese. Once again, I asked him if he could repeat it in English and, as with *Merida*, he used the target language appropriately. Regarding process language used during the pair work tasks, I used it as I modelled the activities and always left it on the board. However, as I walked around the room, I noticed that most students did not use it. (Teacher's learning journal, 10th October 2017; 24th October 2017).

Results from the analysis of my learning journal revealed that the children were aware of their excessive use of Portuguese, "we discussed that [the fact that they used Portuguese] during the reflection when I asked them "*Did you speak a lot of English?*". They acknowledged they used Portuguese saying they sometimes don't feel at ease using English, others, they simply forget that they need to use it" (Teacher's learning journal, 19th October 2017). From 2nd November on, following the reflections, I started to use the United Kingdom flag on the board as a reminder that the students needed to use English. During classes and while giving instructions I often pointed to the flag. The data I collected on that day revealed an immediate change in students' attitude, "*Olivia* answered in English, a full sentence, when I was explaining the pair work activity. I asked her *What do you have to do?* and she answered *Ask the colours.*" (Teacher's learning journal, 2nd November 2017). Also, in that class, during pair work, *Dirk* pointed to the process language on the board (It's *your turn*) and said to his partner "*Agora tens de dizer aquilo [Now you have to say that]*". He said it in Portuguese, but he knew that they had to use that language and that was good".

In the following classes, I noticed an increase in students' willingness to use English outside the context of direct questioning. For instance, *Freddy*, "pointed to the poster on the board (places at school and playground activities) and said "*Look teacher, hide the girl.* At first, I didn't understand what he meant, but he repeated, gestured and pointed again to make himself understood" (Teacher's learning journal, 9th November 2017). It was interesting to notice that the student used all the resources he knew to express himself without using Portuguese. Similarly, *Unicornio1*, on 21st November, used English to say, "*Agente Bolacha is not present*" at the beginning of the lesson and *Bela*, on 23rd November, also at the beginning of the lesson, said: "*Teacher, a problem... no notebook. Esqueci-me [I forgot it]*". The analysis of the learning journal revealed also that the number of entries related to students' use of process language during pair work increased in a positive way. On 14th November, for instance, I wrote: "I left the structures and language they needed on the board and most students used them". Again, on 5th December, I noted: "*Isa Tuber* was

constantly reminding *Shinclass* when it was his turn, saying “*It’s your turn.*” I praised her a lot for it”.

Another relevant category I identified in my learning journal was students’ attitudes towards the activities. All entries in my learning journal concerning the children’s reaction to the tasks I presented were very positive, “They loved the intercultural activity as they were still talking about it when they left for lunch” (Learning journal, 3rd October 2017); “They enjoyed the speaking activities and started to realize that they are going to be a part of all our lessons” (Learning journal, 10th October 2017); “The pair work activity was fun and they were very excited about it” (Learning journal, 24th October 2017); “Today, I feel they learned English, but they also had fun” (Learning journal, 28th November 2017). A reason for this result may be related to the fact that working in pairs was something new to them, as they usually worked individually with their mainstream teacher.

Still related to the activities, I noticed, initially, that students were having difficulties with my instructions as I wrote: “My instructions were not very clear to a few students. Although I repeated and rephrased them, I still had to ask a student to clarify in Portuguese” (Learning journal, 28th September 2017). The solution was to model the activities with the help of the children or model as a whole class activity. This helped to improve understanding of my instructions as the analysis of the journal showed: “The matching activity went very well, I had to model only once, as a whole class activity and they immediately understood what they had to do” (Learning journal, 16th November 2017); “Transforming the whole class activity into pair work was easy. My instructions were simple, and they understood it easily because we had done it on the board as a whole class which served as a model” (Learning journal, 5th December 2017).

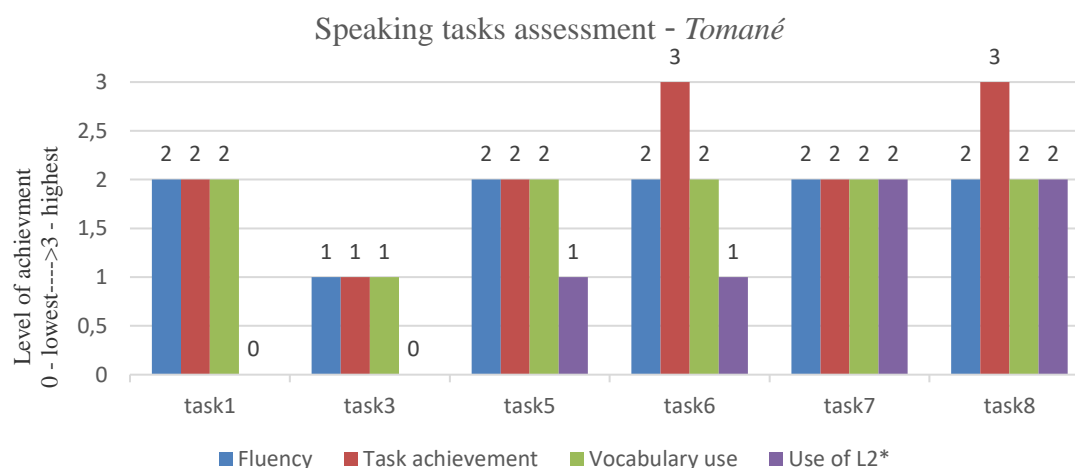
On the whole, results from the analysis of the learning journal supported the fact that students in this group had a good attitude towards learning English and responded well to the strategies I implemented to foster their use of the language and willingness to engage in communication with the teacher. The data collected shows a clear increase throughout the term in the number of learners’ interventions using the target language and this progress in participation and engagement with the language is key to successful learning.

3.3 Observation of pair work tasks

The eight tasks selected for this research were part of a larger group of pair work activities the students carried out during my practicum. Pair work activities were present in almost every lesson and contributed to considerably increase the amount of talking

time each student had. The tasks varied from information gaps to games or a dialogue. The six students I selected to closely monitor showed, in general, a positive progression in vocabulary use, fluency and the use of the target language. The following figures show individual results from the six learners.

Figure 2 compares *Tomané's* development of fluency, task achievement, vocabulary and the mother tongue use over six tasks. This student was one of the weakest and showed difficulties in concentrating. In the analysis of figure 2, it clearly stands out that his lowest scores were in task 3. This activity was an information gap about colours and the Alphabet. *Tomané* struggled with the instructions as I wrote in my learning journal: "I modelled the activity with two students and still had to ask a student to explain it to *Tomané*" (Learning journal, 24th October 2017). Difficulties in carrying out the activity were mainly related to the pronunciation of the letters. In addition, *Tomané's* partner for this activity and the previous one was one of the weaker students. From task 5 on, *Tomané* worked with one of the strongest students in class. Results showed improvements in the completion of the activities, but also in the use of the target language. This was possibly related to the fact that his new partner provided the support necessary to his development in speaking, as suggested by Storch (2002) when she argues that a pattern of interaction such as novice/expert will benefit language learning.

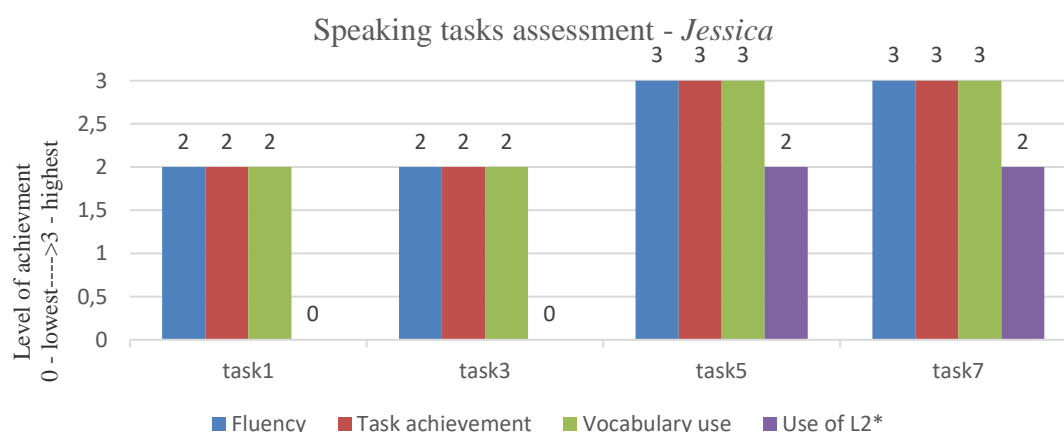


*Use of L2 also for process language; only assessed from task5 on

Figure 2 – Comparison of results from speaking tasks assessment - *Tomané*

Figure 3 shows *Jessica's* development over four pair work tasks. *Jessica* was an average student who was always motivated and attentive. Her partner for task 1 and task 3 was a stronger student. In the remaining two tasks, she worked with a weaker student. Her

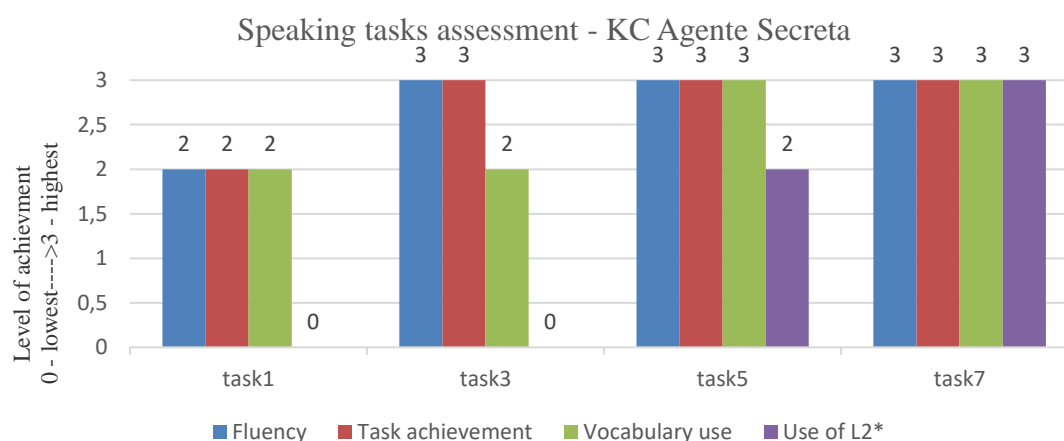
results revealed that she improved her fluency, carried out the tasks with ease and her range of vocabulary was sufficient and adequate. An interesting aspect I wrote in my learning journal about *Jessica* during task 7 was that: “She clearly took a leading role and helped *Tubarão* order his sentences and keep focused, which is not an easy task” (Learning journal, 21st November 2017). This apparent contrast in her results might be explained by the fact that she possibly felt a little intimidated by her first partner in tasks 1 and 3 as he was a bilingual student and that inhibited her oral ability.



*Use of L2 also for process language; only assessed from task5 on

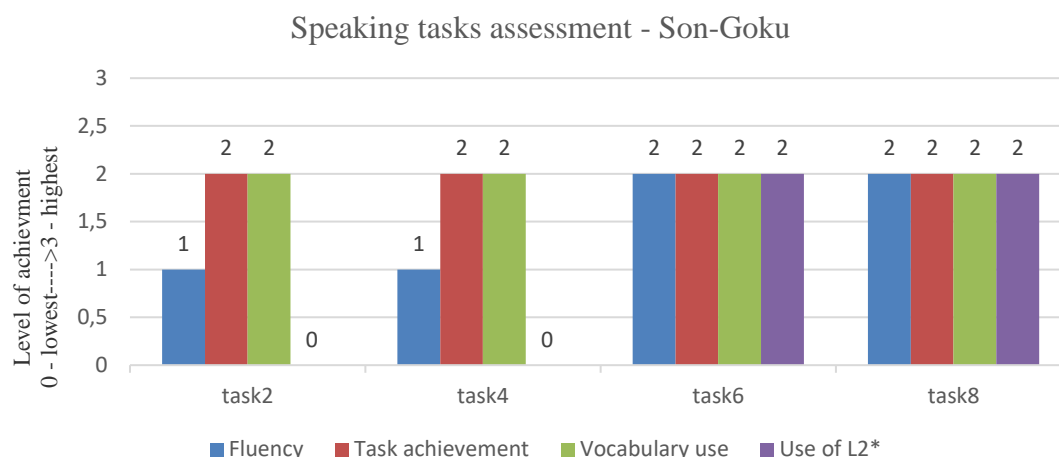
Figure 3 – Comparison of results from speaking tasks assessment – *Jessica*

Figures 4 and 5 show results for *KC Agente Secreta* and *Son-Goku*. Both students revealed positive progress in all items although *KC Agente Secreta* demonstrated a higher level of achievement in all assessed items.



*Use of L2 also for process language; only assessed from task5 on

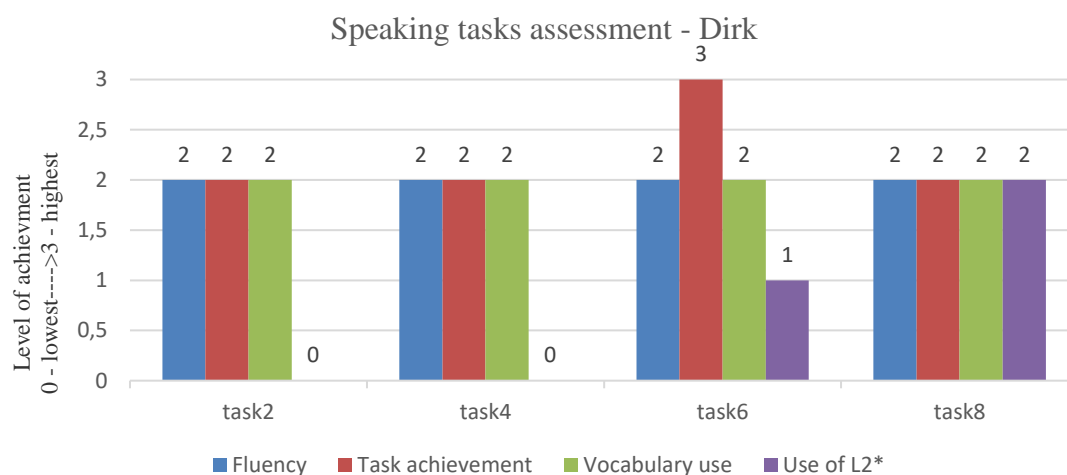
Figure 4 – Comparison of results from speaking tasks assessment – *KC Agente Secreta*



*Use of L2 also for process language; only assessed from task5 on

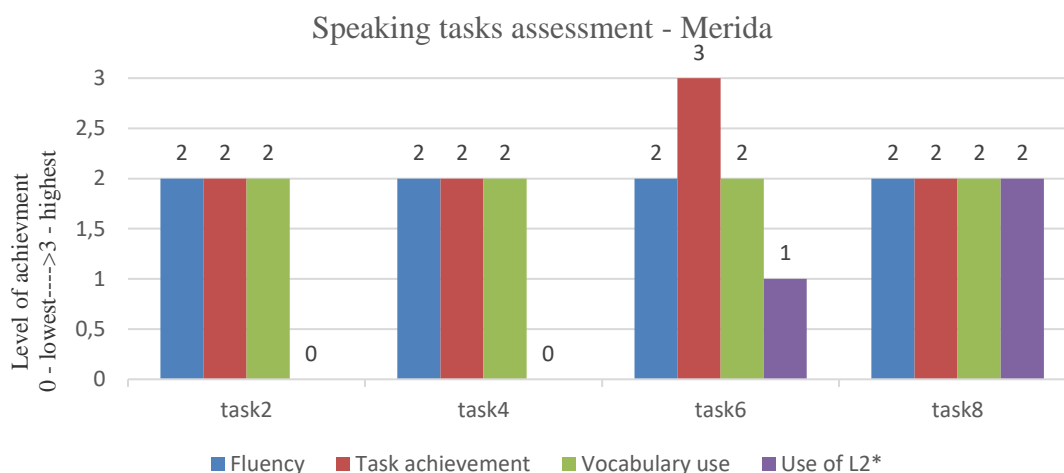
Figure 5 – Comparison of results from speaking tasks assessment – *Son-Goku*

Figures 6 and 7 present *Dirk* and *Merida*'s results. These students also worked with the same partner throughout the research period. Analysis of their graphs reveal that there were no significant developments in their fluency, task achievement and vocabulary use. Nevertheless, in both cases there was a slight improvement in the use of L2 during pair work, related to process language, as I noted in my observations during the assessment.



*Use of L2 also for process language; only assessed from task5 on

Figure 6 – Comparison of results from speaking tasks assessment - *Dirk*



*Use of L2 also for process language; only assessed from task5 on

Figure 7 – Comparison of results from speaking tasks assessment – *Merida*

Overall, results from the pair work tasks showed that the increase of opportunities for using the language was beneficial in terms of the development of vocabulary, fluency and the use of the target language, particularly process language. However, this development was not consistent in all the students I closely observed as I noticed that the learners' oral abilities were positively or negatively influenced according to the person they were paired with. This is in line with Storch's studies (2002) on patterns of interaction in pair work, as this author mentions that collaborative and expert/novice patterns are essential to better learning outcomes. Also, McIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998) and Cao and Philp (2006) argue that willingness to communicate in the target language is influenced by personal traits and the desire to communicate with a specific person, hence learners' performance is also influenced by it.

4. Discussion and conclusions

4.1 The use of pair work to develop oral interaction

This small-scale action research project set out to understand how pair work could impact the development of oral interaction in a group of 26 year 4 students aged between 8 and 10 years old. The development of their willingness to communicate in the target language and their speaking skills were the main strands of the present study. The research was implemented from late-September to mid-December and the first objective was to increase students' interactions in English with teacher and peers using

pair work as a “safe environment” in which to develop self-confidence. The second was to assess the effect of pair work on students’ speaking skills, in particular their ability to use an adequate range of vocabulary, their fluency and their use of the mother tongue. The research tools I used for this study were two questionnaires, a learning journal and observation of students during pair work tasks.

Results from the study showed that the students’ confidence to engage in communication using English increased during the period in which data was collected. Analysis of the learning journal and the questionnaires attributed this to the consistent use of pair work tasks, students’ awareness of their use of L1 and L2 during the reflections carried out at the end of each lesson, and the use of a reminder – the U.K flag. The use of the reminder was a response to the learners’ acknowledgment of their excessive use of the mother tongue. This revealed that, when encouraged, students could be active participants in their own learning process and that explicit reflection routines benefit language learning. While in the first half of the term students from this group only used English in direct questioning or repeating vocabulary, in the second half, some students interacted in spontaneous and meaningful ways either to get the teacher’s attention to observe a poster, to alert her to the fact that a colleague was absent or to say that the notebook had been forgotten at home, as results from the learning journal showed. However positive, all these interactions were between teacher and students. During the study, no data existed to collect concerning interactions between peers in the target language, outside the context of pair work activities. Possible reasons for this could be that students’ vocabulary and grammar were still very limited and there were not many opportunities for meaningful, spontaneous interactions to take place between them.

An interesting finding in this study was that, as shown in previous research, willingness to communicate is influenced, among several other aspects, by the interlocutor. The individual analysis of *Windoh999’s* questionnaires showed that although she initially viewed pair work as beneficial, her opinion changed over the period of the study. In the last questionnaire, contrary to the majority of the students, she stated that she had not enjoyed working in pairs and it had not helped her feel more confident or improve her speaking. Complementary information from the learning journal helped understand that a possible explanation may lie in the fact that she mentioned that she had not enjoyed working with her partner, who remained the same during the time of the research. This result was consistent with a previous study by Cao

and Philp (2006) on the factors influencing willingness to communicate. As mentioned by these authors, students are more willing to use L2 with their friends than with unfamiliar classmates, as was the case with *Windoh999* and *Nemo*, her partner. Cao and Philp (2006) also noted that the relationship between the interactants acts as a “pulling force” (p.488). In this sense, *Windoh999* felt discouraged to use L2 as a result of the lack of motivation and interest her partner showed during pair work. The opposite result was found in the analysis of *Tómane’s* pair work activities. In agreement with Storch’s studies (2002), the expert/novice interaction established between him and *Unicórnio Mágico*, who was a strong and highly motivated student, resulted in successful language learning for *Tomané*. Although *Unicórnio Mágico* took a leading role in every task, she also encouraged and supported her partner.

All the literature reviewed for this research pointed out the benefits of pair work in the development of oral interaction. One major outcome of this research was the increase in the amount of talking time for each student which, in turn, also positively developed students’ confidence to use the target language in whole class situations, mainly with the teacher, as I was not able to observe situations where students spontaneously used English with each other. In a class with 26 children it was only possible to practice the language through pair work activities. Furthermore, this allowed the lessons to be more student centred, as pointed out by Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002). In accordance with previous studies, this study showed there are limitations to peer interaction, such as the levels of noise, excessive use of the mother tongue and off task situations. All these less productive aspects were overcome with the implementation of the strategies that emerged from the analysis and reflection of the data as it was collected.

4.2 Contribution of this research to my development as a teacher

This research was carried out during my training as a future teacher of young learners. I feel that it helped develop my teaching skills, as well as acquire new methodologies that made me a better teacher. It also gave me the opportunity to be a more creative, more effective, and more student-centered teacher. This was my first action research project and it gave me the opportunity to look at my practice in a critical and analytical way. I used the selected tools to experiment and deconstruct theories about the relationship between pair work, oral interaction, the development of speaking and the willingness to communicate with the purpose of using this new knowledge to

promote my students' confidence in using the language, their speaking development and ultimately enhance their achievement. This study was also relevant to my development as a teacher because it improved my planning and assessing of the activities that best suited the needs of my students.

4.3 Pedagogical implications and future research

The findings on this study may be used to enhance oral interaction with other groups of students under the same circumstances. As demonstrated in the previous sections, pair work is beneficial for the development of self-confidence and consequently, the willingness to communicate in L2 with students who are motivated but reluctant to use the target language. However, some aspects must be taken into consideration. Attention must be given to the composition of the dyads as lack of empathy between the two elements may negatively influence the impact of pair work outcomes. This suggests that teachers need to frequently change pair work partners so that the patterns of interaction between them will benefit language learning. The results from this study clearly highlight the relevance and need to give students the opportunity to reflect on their learning, in this particular case on the reasons behind their limited use of the target language. Reflection on these matters will help students and teachers develop the strategies that best suit students' needs. Another pedagogical implication from this study concerns instructions. The success of pair work activities relies, among other aspects, on giving clear instructions and providing enough support in a variety of ways. With this group of students, modelling the tasks as whole class activities proved to present the best results.

Future research may further deepen the knowledge of how personality traits and other variables influence young learners' willingness to communicate. With this information, teachers will more easily develop strategies specifically suited to overcome children's reluctance to use the target language. Another follow up to this study could be research on how children manage their communication while working in pairs, that is, what roles may develop, as they interact with each other and what their impact in language learning is.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Consent letter to parents/tutors

Caros pais e encarregados de educação,

Chamo-me Graça Alexandre e é com muito gosto que irei estar com os vossos educandos a estagiar durante o 1º período deste ano letivo. Estou a fazer um Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo na Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas na Universidade Nova, Lisboa, e o mestrado implica que durante o estágio faça um pequeno projeto de investigação. Este projeto será incluído no meu relatório final. O meu trabalho intitula-se: *Using pair work to promote students' oral interaction* (Usar o trabalho de pares como forma de promover a interação oral dos alunos).

Venho, por este meio, solicitar a sua autorização para poder incluir o seu educando neste projeto que vai decorrer entre setembro e dezembro de 2017 durante o meu estágio. Depois de pedir autorização ao seu educando para a/o incluir no meu estudo, a recolha de dados será efetuada mediante o uso de questionários, observações em sala de aula, excertos do meu diário de professora e a avaliação do desenvolvimento das atividades em pares. A qualquer momento o seu educando pode escolher não participar. As informações obtidas serão analisadas e referidas no meu relatório final de mestrado e eventualmente em artigos académicos e conferências.

A instituição e todos os seus funcionários e as crianças permanecerão anónimas em qualquer circunstância.

Se tiverem questões a colocar agradeço que me contactem pessoalmente através da professora titular de turma.

Agradeço que dê autorização para que o seu educando possa participar no meu estudo. Peço que entreguem esta autorização assinada até ao dia 02 de outubro de 2017.

Graça Alexandre

Professora Doutora Carolyn Leslie

Aluna de Mestrado

Supervisora de Estágio

FCSH, Universidade Nova de
Lisboa

FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa



Eu, _____ encarregado/a de educação do/aluno/a _____
declaro que fui informado/a dos objetivos do projeto "*Using pair work to develop students' oral interaction*" e autorizo o meu educando a participar no estudo.

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Appendix B

Consent letter to school administration

Direção do Agrupamento de Escolas XXXXXXXXXXXX
Rua XXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXX

Exma. Sra. Diretora

No âmbito do protocolo estabelecido entre a Universidade Nova de Lisboa e este Agrupamento para realização do meu estágio em Ensino de Inglês no 1º ciclo, solicito a vossa autorização para a realização do projeto de investigação que constitui parte do relatório final do mestrado. O meu trabalho intitula-se “*Using pair work to promote students’ oral interaction*” e irá decorrer entre setembro e dezembro de 2017, durante o meu estágio com a turma 4B da Escola Básica nr.1 da Baixa da Banheira.

O estudo tem como objetivos entender como o trabalho de pares pode promover a interação oral, aumentar os níveis de confiança e participação dos alunos na língua inglesa, em aula e desenvolver a sua fluência e uso de vocabulário. A recolha de dados será efetuada mediante o uso de questionários, observações em sala de aula, excertos do meu diário de professora e a avaliação do desenvolvimento das atividades em pares. A informação obtida será analisada e utilizada no meu relatório final de mestrado e, eventualmente, em artigos académicos e conferências. Serão igualmente solicitadas autorizações aos alunos e encarregados de educação. A qualquer momento do decorrer da investigação os envolvidos poderão escolher não participar.

A instituição, todos os seus professores, funcionários e as crianças permanecerão anónimas em qualquer circunstância. Nunca serão tiradas fotografias nem obtidas imagens da instituição ou das crianças.

Agradeço desde já a vossa colaboração para proceder à implementação do estudo em causa e manifesto a minha disponibilidade para qualquer esclarecimento através de e-mail gralex02@sapo.pt. Solicito, igualmente, que a autorização seja concedida até 6 de outubro.

Graça Alexandre

Aluna de Mestrado

FCSH, Universidade Nova de
Lisboa

Professora Doutora Carolyn Leslie

Supervisora de Estágio

FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa

.....

Eu, _____ Diretora do Agrupamento de Escolas XXXXXXXX declaro que fui informada dos objetivos do projeto “*Using pair work to develop students’ oral interaction*” e autorizo os alunos da turma X da Escola Básica nº 1 da XXXXXXXXXX a participarem no estudo.

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Appendix C

Consent letter to children

English is fun!



Querido/a aluno/a,

O meu nome é Graça Alexandre e estou a estudar numa universidade para poder ensinar Inglês a meninos e meninas da tua idade. Vou estar com a tua turma durante todo o 1º período e nesse tempo, além de ensinar-vos a disciplina de Inglês, vou fazer um pequeno estudo. A tua participação é muito importante para eu saber de que forma o trabalho em pares pode ajudar-te a falar melhor Inglês e também para te ajudar a participares mais nas aulas usando a língua inglesa com mais confiança.

A tua participação é voluntária, ou seja, podes decidir participar ou não. No caso de aceitares, tens sempre a possibilidade de desistir a qualquer momento, sem problema algum.

O que terás de fazer é muito simples. Apenas terás de responder a pequenos questionários e participar normalmente nas atividades divertidas de pares que iremos fazer na aula. Os resultados dos questionários, da avaliação das atividades de pares e as observações que irei anotar durante as aulas serão o que irei usar no meu projeto.

O teu nome ou a tua imagem nunca irão aparecer no projeto. Podes inventar um nome para ti (um pseudónimo) e caso não o faças irei utilizar um código para te identificar. Os teus pais têm conhecimento de que irei realizar este estudo. Se tiveres alguma dúvida, não hesites em falar comigo ou com a profª Elisabete.

Achas que podes ajudar-me e fazer parte deste projeto?

Professora Graça Alexandre



Eu, _____ aluno/a da turma XX da Escola Básica
nr. 1 da XXXXXXXX

Entendi tudo o que a Prof.ª Graça explicou sobre o projeto



Quero participar no projeto da Prof.ª Graça



Não quero participar no projeto da Prof.ª Graça



(Pinta com uma cor à tua vontade as carinhas que correspondem às tuas respostas)

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Para teres um pseudónimo, escolhe o nome de uma personagem a teu gosto e escreve-o aqui _____

Professora Graça Alexandre



Appendix D

































Questionnaire A

Questionário 1

(Questionnaire 1)

Pinta as carinhas de acordo com aquilo que pensas em relação a cada afirmação.

(Colour the emoji according to your opinion)

	 Concordo muito Agree a lot	 Concordo Agree	 Discordo Disagree	 Discordo muito Disagree a lot
Gosto de falar Inglês na aula. I like to speak English in the classroom.				
Costumo pedir para participar na aula e responder em Inglês. I volunteer to participate in English, during class.				
Sinto-me confortável e à vontade quando falo para toda a turma em Inglês. I feel at ease when I speak English in front of the whole class.				
Sinto-me mais à vontade a falar Inglês num grupo pequeno ou em pares do que para toda a turma. I prefer to speak English in a small group rather than in front of the whole class.				
Gosto de falar em Inglês quando estou a trabalhar em pares. I like to speak English when working in pairs.				
Trabalhar em pares com um colega pode ajudar-me a falar melhor Inglês. Working in pairs can help me speak better English.				
Falar em Inglês perante a professora e os colegas deixa-me nervoso/a. Speaking in English before the teacher and my colleagues makes me nervous.				

Data (date): ____/____/2017

Nome (name): _____



Appendix E

































Questionnaire B

Questionário 2

(Questionnaire 2)

Pinta as carinhas de acordo com aquilo que pensas em relação a cada afirmação.

(Colour the emoji according to your opinion)

	 Concordo muito Agree a lot	 Concordo Agree	 Discordo Disagree	 Discordo muito Disagree a lot
Gosto de falar Inglês na aula. I like to speak English in the classroom.				
Costumo pedir para participar na aula e responder em Inglês. I volunteer to participate in English, during class.				
Sinto-me confortável e à vontade quando falo para toda a turma em Inglês. I feel at ease when I speak English in front of the whole class.				
Sinto-me mais à vontade a falar Inglês em pares do que para toda a turma. I prefer to speak English in pairs rather than in front of the whole class.				
Gostei de falar em Inglês quando trabalhei em pares. I enjoyed speaking English when I worked in pairs.				
Trabalhar em pares com um colega ajudou-me a dizer melhor o vocabulário e as frases em Inglês. Working in pairs helped me speak better English.				
Trabalhar em pares ajudou-me a sentir mais à vontade para falar para toda a turma. Working in pairs helped me feel more comfortable to speak in front of the whole class.				

Data (date): ____/____/2017

Nome (name): _____



Appendix F

Pair work speaking tasks observation sheet

		Student						Student					
Focus	Level	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
Fluency	Frequent and long pauses cause difficulties in communicating.												
	Communicates even though there are some long pauses.												
	Communicates effectively without long pauses.												
Task Achievement	Had difficulties in carrying out the task.												
	Carried out the task but with some difficulty.												
	Carried out the task successfully and with relative ease.												
Vocabulary use	Insufficient or inappropriate vocabulary that hindered communication. Resorted to L1 most of the time.												
	Range of vocabulary sufficient to complete the task. Use of a few words or expression in L1.												
	Sufficient and appropriate range of vocabulary to adequately complete the task. No use of L1.												

Adapted from: Iannou-Georgiou, S., & Pavlou, P. (2003). Assessing young learners. Oxford: OUP.

Appendix G

Pair work tasks

Task 1

- **Fill in the grid. Interview your friend and ask these questions to complete it.**

Questions	Me!	My friend!
What's your name?		
What's your surname?		
How old are you?		
Where are you from?		
What's your nationality?		

Task 2

BATTLESHIP GAME!



	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	I		You		eleven.	
2	'm			're		
3	John.					
4			He	's	English.	
5	It					
6	's					France.
7	a	pen.			from	
8				're		
9			We			

Find the sentences

I'm John. _____

It's a pen. _____

We're from France. _____

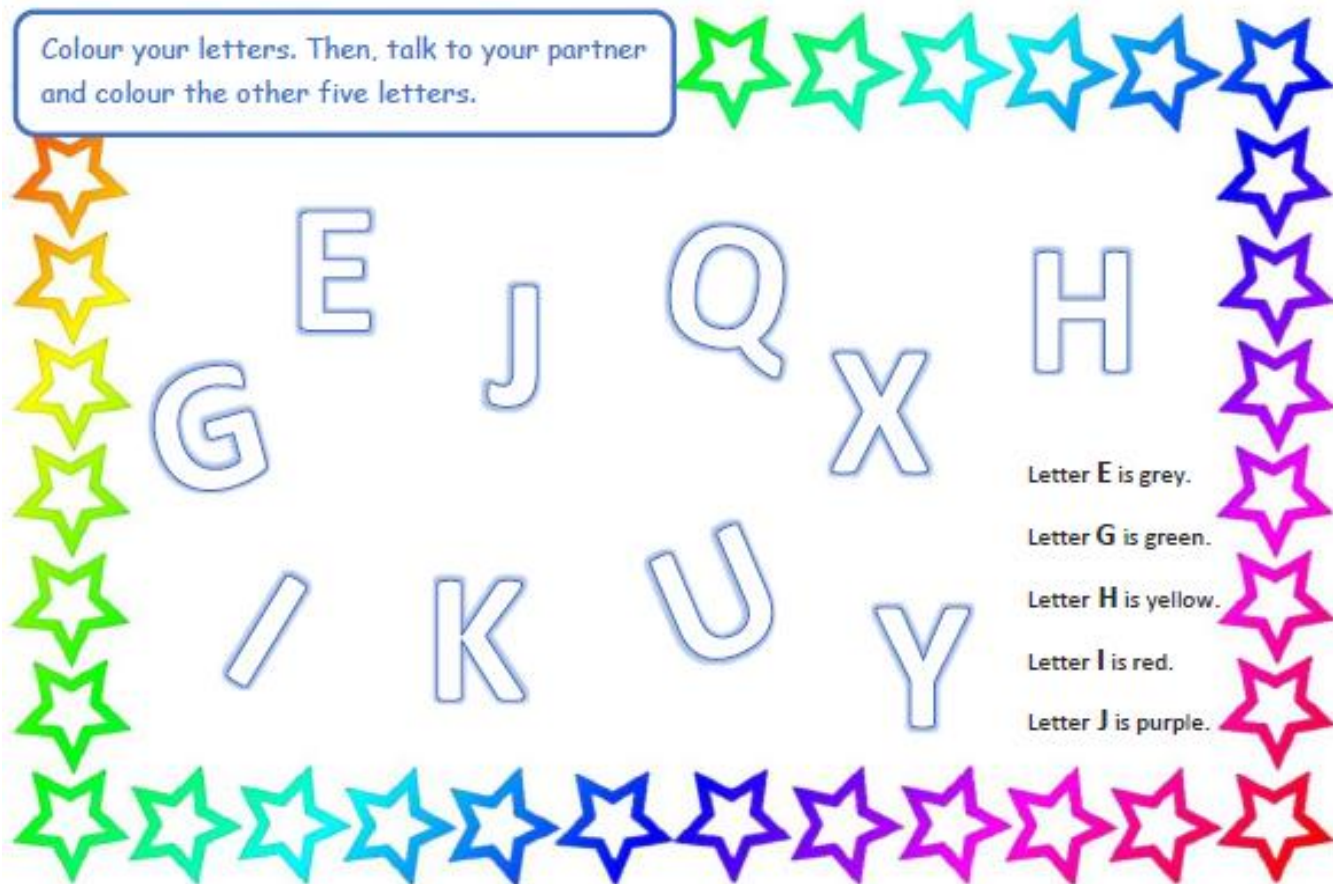
You're eleven. _____

He's English. _____

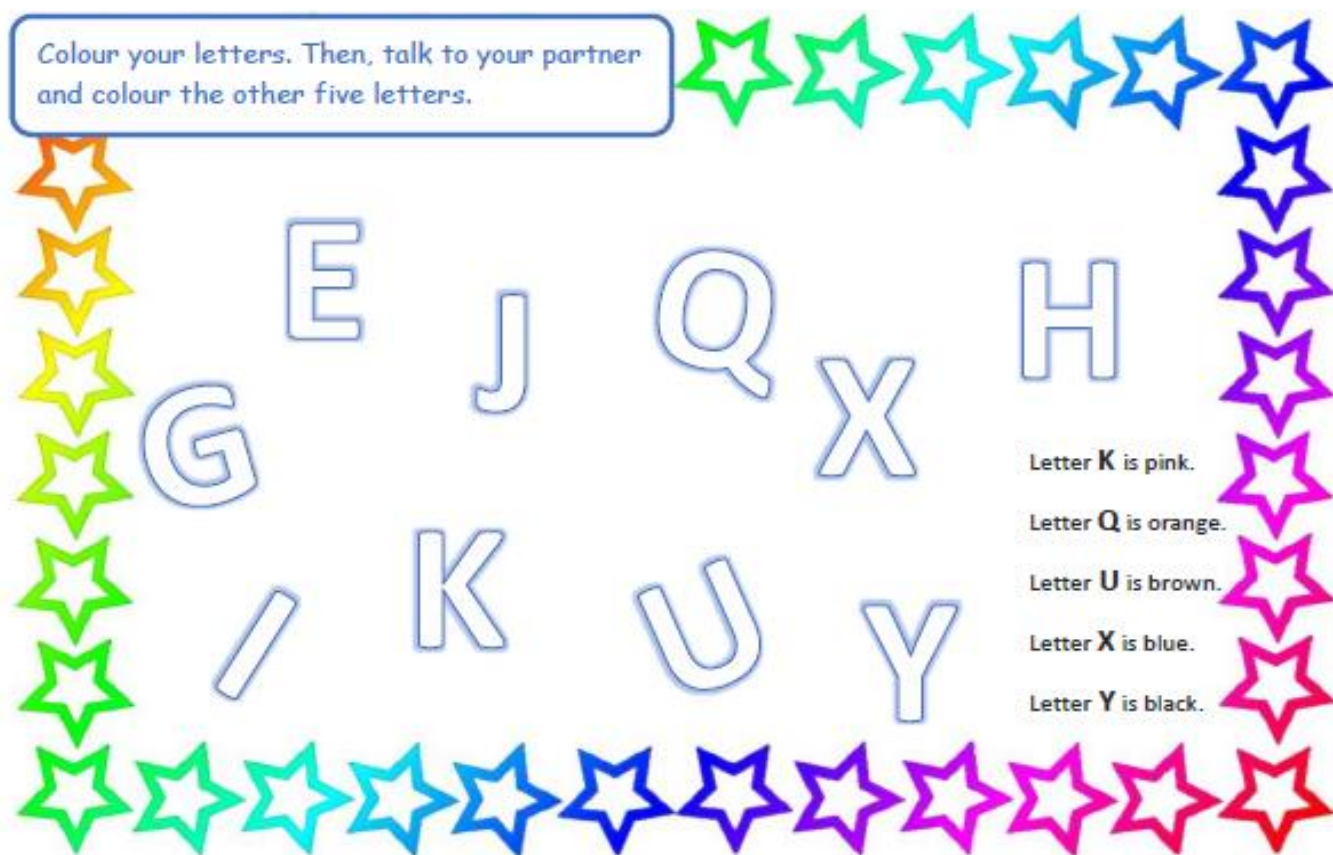
		A	B	C	D	E	F
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							

Task 3

Colour your letters. Then, talk to your partner and colour the other five letters.








Colour your letters. Then, talk to your partner and colour the other five letters.

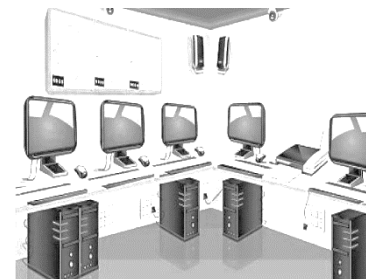
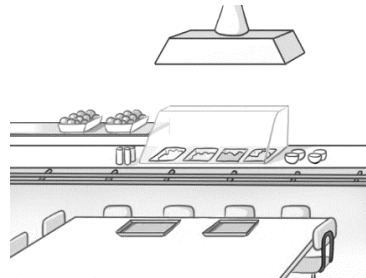
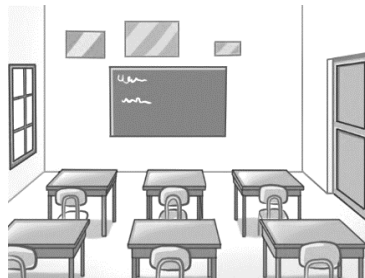
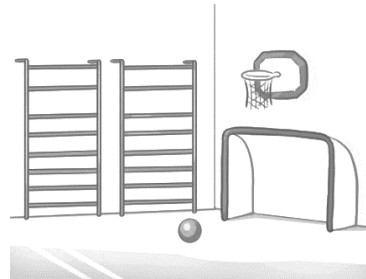


Task 4

Listen carefully and colour the numbers. Find the way to the treasure! Next, play with your partner, using a different colour.

4	14	0	5	2	3	→ 
9	18	1	20	11	29	→ 
12	11	17	19	19	11	→ 
6	3	13	13	13	17	→ 
8	0	7	7	12	14	→ 


Task 5



Task 6

First	January
Second	February
Third	March
Fourth	April
Fifth	May
Sixth	June
Seventh	July
Eighth	August
Ninth	September
Tenth	October
Eleventh	November
Twelfth	December

Task 7

She's	reading	a book.	 
He's	writing	a letter.	 
We're	playing	cards.	 
I'm	dancing	ballet.	 
You're	drawing	a house.	 
They're	listening	to music.	 

Task 8

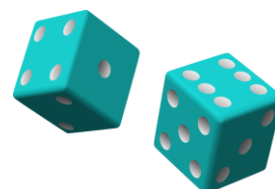
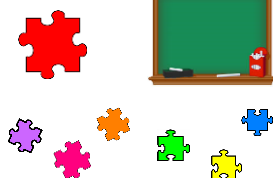
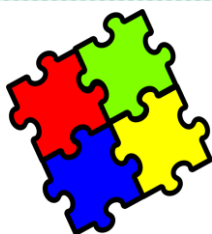
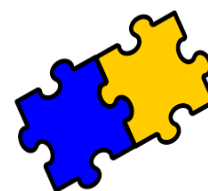
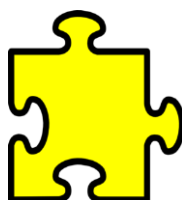


Dialogue cards *script*:

- Hello!
- Hi!
- What's your name?
- My name is Sarah.
- What's your surname?
- My surname is Smith.
- How old are you?
- I'm 9 years old, and you?
- I'm 10 years old. Where are you from?
- I'm from the USA. I'm American.
- Good bye!
- Bye!

Appendix H

Reflection cards



WORD

PHRASES